

Record of Interview



Special Inspector General for
Afghanistan Reconstruction

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Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization (S/CRS)

(b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C)

The way it had been originally conceived was a mess. As created in 2004, CRS certainly never got traction, and not in Afghanistan. There was impetus, but not the money; it was floundering for a purpose. The USG was sending thousands of civilians to Afghanistan, but CRS had a relatively small number of people – a team of 20 people in Kabul were trying to integrate civilian and military, national and regional plans together. CRS had people working with Regional Commands trying to do the same thing, and people at Bagram providing technical advice.

Recommendation: Line authority for coordinator role

If you're willing to be a bit bolder in your recommendations, I have some ideas. When you talk about improving coordination, it's like rearranging chairs on the Titanic.

The fundamental problem with coordination is lack of authority. Look at whoever is responsible for coordination. If they don't have **line authority**, there's not much they can do. Unless they have a tremendous personality.

USAID doesn't report to anyone but Secretary of State. And they have their own budgetary requirements. The military has way more money than they know what to do with. When the metric is how much money you spend, effectiveness goes by the board.

Look at the structure, at giving **statutory and budgetary authority** to actually direct. Otherwise, you can have a ton of meetings, etc, without significant effect. This will require a substantial **bipartisan conversation with Congress** – but it's absolutely necessary.

There are two approaches:

- 1) Redoing the Foreign Assistance Act. Though that may be too hard.
- 2) Emergency reconstruction: providing some kind of extraordinary authority. This is something that needs to happen. If you don't have command authority, you can't do it. [KB note: "it" being effective coordination, I gathered from context.]

The military *needs* to be part of this. We need to say, you are *part of* the interagency. Look at what was happening in Vietnam in the CORDS [KB note: Civil Operations and Rural Development Support] program. We were instituting lessons learned for true civ-mil integration.

Clarity on objectives

You also need to consider, what are we trying to do? What are our objectives? This is missed in lots of discussion.

We were pretty successful in humanitarian assistance; at least we alleviated that initial crisis. But we've been falling down on the development side. In Afghanistan, we conflated our political, security, humanitarian, and development goals. We were successful on humanitarian, not so much on development. Why are we providing aid? If the goal is long-term development, the whole effort is different – can't get there with CERP-like projects.

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I'm a skeptic. Our development is not built on planning; it almost looks like the Soviets with an emphasis on central planning.

US engagement with Europeans, NATO, UN

It struck me how often we changed structures. You need to bring the EU and non-NATO members into the equation. When you try to do it with NATO alone, NATO doesn't necessarily represent the civilian side of the equation. These countries have a lot of non-military assets. The Europeans don't do it the same way [KB note: i.e., the same way as the US]; we're not talking to the right people. There's more distrust of the military among Europeans, and of the American military in particular. We should take State, AID, and the military as a group to talk to the Europeans – so we come as a group not overly dominated by the military. It's important to go to EU structures because that's the way they approach it.

If you get the US and Europeans together, this allows us to be more coherent with the UN. The UN depends on some very good personalities – we need to ensure they appoint very good people. We do good lip service over local responsibility, but when things go south, we take over. We should be willing to take more risks, accept honest failure, and let people learn from that.

The larger picture is *US-European* coordination. Focus on their structures. Get European aid agencies involved from the get-go; that will prevent later problems.

S/CRS role

S/CRS attended a number of conferences in Europe. The problem was at the time, Europeans had difficulty figuring out what kind of organization they were going to use. Every time we went to talk, we'd find a different person in charge. So we had more fruitful conversations with the Brits, Germans, e.g. working together in South Sudan. There was a very competent resident UN coordinator there. What tends to happen is your *field* coordination is a lot more effective than your headquarters coordination. If you can pull people together under the aegis of the Ambassador, then good.

An organizational flaw of CRS was that in a crisis, they'd shove everyone out of the way. That's a non-starter from day 1. You need to put the Ambassador in charge, give that person authority. Then on aid coordination, put someone under the Ambassador. It's important for the aid coordinator to be following the political requirements, because it can't be a separate effort. It takes a certain kind of person to run an embassy in a crisis or conflict environment. Ambassador needs someone really good in the coordinator role, and Washington to not micro-manage.

State's Civilian Response Corps (CRC)

Our surge capacity in CSO [KB note: State/Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations] has gotten worse. The CRC (Civilian Response Corps) has been gutted. (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) It had had about \$147 million per year; it was a line item but is not anymore, I think it was subsumed into the overall State budget, with about \$10 million/year now.

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This is the difficulty in the way S/CRS was conceived. You have a standing army of civilians in waiting, they go in and run police, judiciary, etc – it's not a good model politically. So you look at the requirements of a particular country. Iraq and Afghanistan, for example, needed different levels of support; how do you tailor your response?

Training for Civilians

In both Iraq and Afg, there was this dynamic: you saw 50 colonels working on something, we'd say we need 50 civilians on the same thing. But what is their value added? Frankly, there's no training. (KB note: inadequate training on the civilian side.) (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C)

I got 1 week cultural/historical training on Afghanistan, 1 week "crash and bang" etc. (KB note: referring to driving/weapons/counter-intel training). In Vietnam, people got *one year* of training – studying the language, culture.

You can't send someone to work with locals if they don't speak the language; part of the investment is actually taking time to adequately train. I would argue that a small number of people well-trained will be more effective than a large group, however smart they are, on six month tours with little training. In Iraq, we could have done this.

State and interagency staffing in conflict/contingency ops environment

On the civilian side, State is about 8,000 generalists. We pull people away from embassies around the world, but our interests in those countries will not go away. At the height of the wars, only Baghdad and Kabul embassies were fully staffed. So how do we staff these missions? Contractors? Other agencies? We need to ask what's the value added – is Dept of Transportation or Commerce necessary or do we just want to demonstrate that this is a whole-of-government effort?

It goes back to, what are we trying to accomplish? We must be more modest in expectations. That's also about setting the correct metrics.

Corruption / Effective aid

I have no tolerance for corruption – either by people we're giving aid to, or by our own. (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C)

On corruption, the biggest thing is to *slow down* our spending.

UN engagement

(b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) The fundamental, number one thing is on the ground, you need the UN there. In Iraq, we told them, we don't need you. The political lesson is you have to spend the time building support on the Security

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Council, etc. Second, you must provide the resources to enable the UN to do its job. We've not done this very well; we keep a very tight line on the UN. We must involve these international organizations: UN Dept of Political Affairs, World Food Program, etc. This is basic diplomatic groundwork – ensure the US and the international community shares the same aims. The IC must have a commonality of interest versus the UN being seen as a tool of US foreign policy. The US should be providing more ground troops for UN peace-keeping operations. There's a lot we could do in terms of logistics, intelligence, etc.

A fundamental thing is building a coalition of support. Do what Bush I did in the 90s, in Gulf War. Ask, what will it look like in 10 years and how do we get there?

USG internal coordination

Ensure you have a lead person who has *authority* to do this. Ryan Crocker in Iraq is a great example. He had a lot of authority in the USG, married all elements of USG. When you have a powerful personality like Holbrooke running things from Washington, you can have very confused lines of authority of command. We need people like Holbrooke but he ended up spending a good deal of time fighting turf battles versus getting things done. It depends on having authority to pull together all elements of USG. Holbrooke did not have clear lines of authority, and difficulties arose from that.

Interagency exercises for contingency ops

USG civilian and military elements should be exercising these kinds of contingency operations. You would have to force State to do this, change the culture. You have to make this part of their day jobs, and need the budget to do so. You'd need Sec State to say, we have to do this.

Every embassy every year must exercise its emergency action plan. (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C)

[REDACTED]

You could pick a geographical area, pull the interagency in, and make it look like a real conflict operation. Exercise for a few days. This would require Sec State support, and should include the NSC.

Follow-up Items

None.